

ABSTRACT

A secure postage-metering device has a computer and a printhead drivable by the computer for imprinting indicium on a piece of mail. Also included is a receiver for receiving programming instructions from a remote location for operation of the computer, and apparatus for establishing an amount of postage to be imprinted as part of the indicium on the piece of mail. The computer is operative in response to the programming instructions to cryptographically encode the indicium by use of a coding key included within the programming instructions. The computer is operative further in response to the programming instructions to authorize an amount of postage to be placed on the mail. An encoded indicium on the piece of mail is readable by a reading device of the Postal Service for verification of authenticity of postage appearing on the piece of mail.